

Tips to Determine When It Is Time for Difficult Decisions



By Shelley Krupa, Business Operations Coordinator at Lake Hallie Memory Care

A year or more into the pandemic and we're still learning how to avoid the COVID-19 virus and how to protect the most vulnerable population. As a member of the Dementia Coalitions, I've witnessed first-hand people who are experiencing personal challenges dealing with illnesses on top of having to make tough decisions about what's safe and best for their loved ones.

If that describes you, those challenges are no doubt real and on your mind 24/7.

There are added concerns of having to go out into the public to do essential shopping and then potentially bringing back the virus to your loved one. Your mind is weighed down with thoughts of whether or not to seek assistance from a 24/7 assisted living setting to help protect them?

Those thoughts seem daunting with the added fear of restrictions facilities have on visitations based upon recommendations from the CDC. The thought of, "Will I ever get to see them again in person?" is a tough one to accept, isn't it?

Don't let your fears prevent you from reaching out to facilities to ask how they help loved ones stay connected during the pandemic. You may find comfort and be pleasantly surprised at what they are doing to keep your loved one safe and connected and how the restrictions have been modified since last year.

It's important to weigh options early on as you recognize warning signs of your loved one's decline. Carefully consider your health and well-being, too. Especially if you are stressed and worried about them. Whether they are living alone or with you, it is best to plan, versus waiting for a crisis to happen.

Please know that you're not alone. Reach out for assistance with local ADRCs as they give excellent advice on options available. In the meantime, to get your thoughts organized, I'll leave you with a list of items to consider.

A move to a memory care facility is common when you notice increased caregiver stress or changes in a loved one's:

Communication:

- Conversations are hard to follow
- A decrease in their reaching out to you
- They no longer send cards or letters
- They hurry to get off the phone

Self-Care:

- Inexplicable weight loss/gain
- Unusual hair or clothing
- Inappropriate dress for occasion/weather
- Smell of urine in clothing
- Staying up later, rising later
- Wandering, getting lost
- Sun-downing
- Falls or accidents

Social Life:

- Not ready for appointments
- Forgetting you'd be visiting; surprised to see you
- No longer mentioning friends
- Avoiding long-standing social engagements (church, clubs, etc.)
- Loss of interest in grandchildren

Household:

- Inappropriate temperatures in the house
- Multiple items of the same kind of unusual items in cupboards
- Fridge with spoiled food or nearly empty
- Melted or burned cookware
- Smell of urine
- Unopened mail

